

# Christmas markets a local tradition

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Public affairs

Just as each family has their own way of preparing for Christmas, so does each country. In Germany, one of the traditions during the four weeks preceding Christmas is the Christmas Market.

Many cities and villages feature these markets. At various stands you'll find Christmas decorations and gifts. There are also stands selling food and beverages.

If you've never been to one, you might consider visiting a Christmas market. Some are world-famous such as the Christkindlesmarkt, or Christ Child Market, in Nuernberg and Rothenburg ob der Tauber. Others are small, lasting only one day or a weekend. Rothenburg has a small Christmas market and is only about a two-hour drive from Rhein-Main.

The Nuernberg market is the larger one and also known as the oldest in Germany. This pre-Christmas market can be traced back to the middle of the 16th Century. Historians, however, currently name 1628 as the first year of the market for which official records exist, as there is an unambiguous piece of evidence from that year.

There is a 19-centimeter oval wooden box painted with flowers in the German National Museum, which bears an inscription in black on its base saying that the box was sent on the occasion of the Christchild's Market in 1628. This box with original content is currently regarded as the oldest piece of evidence.

There is a list of notices for stallholders from 1737. This shows that nearly all of Nuernberg's craftsmen were represented in the "town of stalls."

The market lost a lot of its importance at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, but in 1933 a new ceremony began, where a "gold foil angel" recited a prologue, choirs of children sang and church bells pealed.

Tickets and Tours offers weekend trips to several of the Christmas markets. For information or reservations, contact Tickets and Tours at DSN 330-7459.

Of the nearby markets, Frankfurt is



Courtesy photo

*The Christmas market in Nuernberg is Germany's oldest.*

open daily from 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.; Mainz is open Mon-Fri from 11 a.m. - 8:30 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. - 9 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.; Mannheim is open daily from 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.; Heidelberg is open daily from 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.; and Wiesbaden is open Mon-Fri from 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. - 8:30 p.m., and Sunday from noon - 8 p.m. (but will be closed Nov. 25).

The Rudesheim on the Rhein market is only open Wed-Fri from 2-9 p.m. and weekends from 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.

## Market Dates

Nuernberg	Nov 30 to Dec 24
Rothenburg	Nov 30 to Dec 22
Frankfurt	Nov 22 to Dec 21
Wiesbaden	Nov 23 to Dec 23
Mainz	Nov 29 to Dec 22
Heidelberg	Nov 28 to Dec 22
Mannheim	Nov 28 to Dec 23
Koln	Nov 22 to Dec 23
Koblenz	Nov 24 to Dec 23
Rudesheim	Nov 28 to Dec 23